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**G U A R D I A N**

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the riches of Christ to those who will never know of Him in any other way.

How impressive is the account of the eagerness of the early church to preach the gospel and win men to Christ. This did not arise from a half-hearted attempt to obey a command, but expressed a desire to make known what the disciples had heard, seen, and handled of the Word of Life. One writer, Bryan Green, says, "They were new men in Christ, and so vividly had the newness of life stirred them that they simply had to try to pass it on."

How may we revive that sense of urgency today? It is not enough to sing nostalgically

"Where is the blessedness I knew  
When first I saw the Lord  
Where is the soul-refreshing view  
Of Jesus and His Word?"

With the Greek and the Barbarian at our doorstep in the person of a pagan neighbor or a sceptical business associate the mission field is before our eyes. Let the truth of modern man's sinful condition amid all his boasted civilization and our own key position as the bearers of good tidings go beyond intellectual assent. Paul and those missionaries who follow in his train humbly, but surely, know themselves as having in their possession what the world desperately needs.

Let us begin by personally praying for grace to witness for Christ. Instead of generalization in prayer for the missionaries at home and abroad, let us ask God to fill our own hearts with a sense of the urgency of the missionary task. Let us pray as we sing,

"Send men whose eyes have seen the  
King,  
Men in whose ears His sweet words  
ring;  
Send such Thy lost ones home to bring;  
Send them where Thou wilt come."

The consecration of Paul to Christ in the preaching of the Word was combined with an assurance that the message he proclaimed was true. The gospel was not a "cunningly devised fable." It was the power of God unto Salvation to everyone who believed. Rome, the center of culture, did not frighten Paul. The philosophers and sceptics of Mars Hill and Corinth did not force him to hedge. There was no doubt in Paul's mind that his message was the only effective remedy for man's fatal disease of sin.

We are all aware of the fact that suc-

cessful salesmen must believe in their product. This also holds for those who would bring the gospel of God's grace to men. We may not allow the relativism of the day with its vapid tolerance of all religions as being good and profitable for men's souls to influence our thinking. A native of India visited England and said after visiting some of the churches, "The saddest thing I notice in the English Church is her lack of faith in the supernatural power of God." Undoubtedly this may be said of many churches in this land also.

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church is happily confessing the truth of the Word of God, the Bible. Yet we may sometimes feel incapable of vigorously confronting men with the Christian message because of their conditioning by modern science and unbelief. There is no reason for hesitation. We may not understand the mysterious ways in which God performs His wonders, but that He *does* save the soul by the foolishness of preaching we may not doubt. The world has seen philosophies of men come and go. Empires rise and fall and movements fade with the passing of time. But when the words of Paul and Silas "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" are heeded power is at work which man cannot duplicate, with all his knowledge.

Assurance concerning this message will not come without the study of God's Word. Nor can we personally testify to the power of the gospel unless we have known Christ. Nor will we pursue the calling of Christian witness with determination unless we believe that its message is for the world.

At the time of the writing of this article there is tremendous interest in the political campaign but perhaps greater interest in the question "Who will win the National League pennant?" Christian, ask yourself, "Have I ever been as greatly interested in the salvation of a soul? As you have seen a procession of cars in a funeral have you ever wondered if the soul of that person whose body is being laid to rest is with the Lord or in hell? Have you ever thought enough about *your* calling as a Christian witness to forget yourself in sacrificial labor and giving? If not, pray, in James Montgomery's words:

"Wisdom and zeal and faith impart,  
Firmness with meekness from above,  
To bear Thy people on our heart,  
And love the souls whom Thou dost  
love;

To watch and pray, and never faint;  
By day and night strict guard to keep;  
To warn the sinner, cheer the saint,  
Nourish Thy lambs, and feed Thy sheep."

## Non-ecumenical Christians

*Address of Welcome to Westminster Seminary Students*

By C. VAN TIL

IT IS NOW MY PRIVILEGE to address a few words of welcome to the students that are coming to us for the first time. I do so in the name of the faculty.

We welcome you, of course, to our fellowship. We should like, each one of us, to be your personal friends. We should like to be among those to whom you go with your personal interests and problems.

But, more basically, we welcome you to a fellowship of service of Jesus Christ our Lord. It is he, whose we are and whom we serve, whose you also are and whom you also serve. It is him whom all of us would serve with increasing devotion. We would learn to know him better in order to love him more. We would learn more of his wondrous condescension shown in coming into our world of sin and woe, there to humble

himself even to the death of the cross for the salvation of men. We would learn of the love of God who sent his only Son into the world that whosoever should believe in him might be saved. We would also learn of the Holy Spirit who takes the things of Christ and gives them unto us.

But where shall we learn more about the Christ whom we love? Of course, you say, in the Bible. Does not the Bible tell us about God, about man and his sin, about Christ and his coming to save man from this sin and therefore from the wrath of God to come? Perhaps you believe the Bible to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Perhaps you are a "Bible-believing Christian." Perhaps you come from the "Bible-belt." And so you are ready to join us  
(See "Van Til," p. 141)

## Van Til

(Continued from p. 134)

in a study of the Bible.

But surely you have come for a special purpose. You have come to prepare yourself to preach the gospel. You think of this seminary as a place where you may make this preparation. You think of the faculty of this seminary as those who wish to help you to do this very thing. And in this you are right. For this very purpose was the Seminary brought into existence. The faculty desires to unfold to you and to learn with you ever more of God as eternal and unchanging in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. The faculty would unfold to you and learn with you ever more of what it means that man was made in the image of God and that he became involved with Satan in rebellion against God, now being therefore subject to the wrath of God and therefore to eternal separation from God. The faculty would unfold before you and learn with you ever more of Christ, the great prophet, priest and king who came to save men from eternal death and bring them eternal life.

All this must be done in the face of the world situation as it obtains today. We do not live in the times of Luther and of Calvin. To be sure Roman Catholicism still sets tradition next to the Bible as the source of man's knowledge of God. It therewith cancels out the Bible as *the* Word of God. On this basis it is finally not the Bible but the church that informs man about God the Father, about Jesus Christ the Son, and about the Holy Spirit, and their work in relation to man. Thus the triune God loses his uniqueness. The God of the Scriptures must share his place with the God of Aristotle. The coming of the Christ continues in the coming of the church. The work of the Holy Spirit needs supplementation by the work of man.

With Luther and with Calvin we need therefore continually to go back to the Scriptures away from the church of Rome. But what Romanism did in the days of the Reformation is now being done within the protestant church itself and that in very subtle form.

There is still with us today the movement in the church often spoken of as modernism. This is not meant to be a term of reproach. It is meant to signify that men, ministers and seminary teach-

ers, take the "modern" view of the Bible. And whatever else this may mean it surely does mean that the Bible is not to be regarded as the infallible rule of faith and practice.

Secondly there is with us today what is called neo-orthodoxy. We may fairly enough call this the new modernism. And this too is not meant as a term of reproach. For however much Karl Barth and Emil Brunner may be said to have called men back to the Bible they would be the last to claim that they believe in the Bible as being, even in the original languages, the infallible record of God's revelation to man.

Now this rejection of the Bible as the infallible rule of faith and practice is not a matter of small importance. It cannot be met on the part of the "Bible-believing Christian" by some minor concession that he might make. It cannot be met, for instance, by saying that the Bible is, in any case, a trustworthy historical record of the revelation of God to man. The modernist and the new modernist are not satisfied with such concessions. They have themselves

rejected the idea of an infallible Bible because they believe no final or finished revelation of God to man is possible in history. Their rejection of the Bible as the orthodox protestant church believes in it stems finally from their assumption that God is a different sort of God, that man is a different sort of man and Christ is a different sort of Christ than the orthodox protestant church has historically believed. A modern view of the Bible goes with a modern view of God, a modern view of man and a modern view of Christ. One must take them all or leave them all.

In our day the modernists and the new modernists have joined hands with one another in the so-called ecumenical movement. And a great effort is being made by modern churchmen everywhere to transform this ecumenical movement into an ecumenical church. Anyone can be a member of this church so long as he does *not* believe in the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Well, he might be allowed in even so long as he would hold such a belief to himself or at most speak of it as a

## Correspondence

### TO THE EDITOR

Three dollars a minute. To be worth that much a speech should be like apples of gold in baskets of silver. When I mentioned such things on the floor of a General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church some years ago, the commissioners laughingly suggested that I sit down. But the point was made, and many men remember it well. It costs about five thousand dollars to take pastors and elders out of their fields and seat them together for a week at General Assembly.

How can we trim this frightful outlay of cash? The suggestion that we limit attendance at assembly to elected commissioners has been debated and defeated, both in 1944 and 1953. But a more likely method is commending itself more and more to the men of the church. Let the Assembly meet every two years instead of every year.

This year, the committee reports and statistics were ready for the Assembly in printed form. What made this welcome change possible? There were fourteen months since the last Assembly. The extra time made the difference. Ideas were presented in a more mature form, and this made for less debate on the reports of standing committees. Next year, there will be twelve months, and the next year, probably ten. That ten month period will see a return to incomplete reports, beyond doubt, and the Assembly will

be hampered. But think what a difference a two-year period would make. One set of printed minutes, one travel fund (which could be made quite adequate), one time away with its wear and tear of travel, matured reports, and more material to make the Assembly worth while. Two years is often enough.

In recent years, the incumbents of the standing committees have more often than not, been returned to office. This reflects the happy condition of our church, in its freedom from partisan politics. As things now stand, no real difference in committee structure would be observed if the Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Christian Education Committees consisted of two classes each, each class serving four years, with elections every two years. Each class could consist of five ministers and three elders.

An Assembly every year is luxury we can ill afford. We are meeting too often for our own good. Two years is often enough. If you agree, why not write a letter to the Stated Clerk of your presbytery, requesting that the presbytery overture the General Assembly to make this change in the Form of Government. Enough of these letters, and enough of these overtures would mean that we could change the constitution in time to omit the General Assembly of 1959. And a saving of five thousand dollars in 1959 is worth going after, especially if it also saves a similar amount in 1961, 1963, 1965, etc.

E. E. ELLIOTT

belief that is of no more importance than any other belief. For in that case such a belief would have cancelled itself out as belief in the Bible as really the Word of God.

Walter F. Reif speaks of those who still believe the Bible in the traditional way as belonging to "non-ecumenical Protestantism." Of this non-ecumenical Protestantism he speaks as follows:

"Even a slight contact with non-ecumenical Protestantism today brings the realization that it prides itself on its knowledge of the Bible, that it considers its ministers the only truly religiously educated clergy and by implication dismisses the rest. It is probably well within the mark to say that these non-ecumenical groups produce the worst theological scholarship that has ever issued from a Protestant source. They have little appreciation for the theologians who labored in yesteryears; they disregard the historical background of texts; and they hold the fantastic belief that they have a monopoly of God's truth. Their spirit is that of dissension. There is dissension within ecumenical Protestantism too, but it is not accepted as God's will, and calls forth repentance and shame. There is an awareness that no denomination has the prerogative of forcing God's hand or the right to assume that it has a monopoly of his truth. Most of the creative scholarship of Protestantism today is coming out of the ecumenical movement."

Out of this charge we take three items for special mention:

(1) The "non-ecumenical" group is said "to produce the worst theological scholarship that has ever issued from a Protestant source." How can we answer this without seeming to be boastful? It was J. Gresham Machen's contention that Christianity—and he meant the Christianity involving and based upon the idea of the infallible Scripture—"was capable of scholarly defense." His students knew that he never evaded or avoided any of the facts that had bearing on the Scriptures. Our aim today is still the same as was that of Machen. So far as time and our common limitations permit, you will be made conversant with all that the leading biblical scholars of our own day have to say about the Bible, as well as with the views of those of "yesteryears."

(2) Of the "non-ecumenical group" it is said: "Their spirit is that of dissension." Again how can we answer this

without seeming to be boastful? Let us hasten to confess with our fathers that we have only a small beginning of that love to Christ and our fellow-men that should mark those that are saved by grace. We all act the part of the Pharisee again and again. We confess with shame this our fault and sin. With Paul we would cry out: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

But though there is this false dissension, springing from our wicked hearts, there is, we believe from the Scripture, also a true dissension. Luther and Calvin were sinful men. In them too there was false dissension. Yet the main thrust of their struggle against Romanism was in the interest of bringing the Christ of the Scriptures to men. They found that Christ in the Scriptures alone. That Christ himself, through his prophets and apostles, explained to them who he was and what he had come to do in the world. Luther and Calvin listened in the Scriptures to this self-attesting Christ. It was that Christ that they would bring, through his word of authority spoken in the Scriptures, to sinners in need. It was to that Word of that Christ that Luther appealed when, at the Diet of Worms, he said: "I cannot do otherwise."

So, it is not because we find pleasure in disagreement with others, but because we cannot do otherwise, in the face of the needs of sinful men, men lost forever unless they submit to the Christ of the Scriptures, that we must register basic dissent both with the modernist and with the new-modernist on their view of the Scripture.

(3) "Non-ecumenical Protestantism" is said to "hold the fantastic belief that they have a monopoly of God's truth." This point is basic to all. But here appears to be some misunderstanding. It is one thing to hold that the Bible is the "infallible rule of faith and practice." It is quite a different thing for any man, for any group of men, for any church to say that it has a monopoly in understanding what the Bible teaches. The mind of man is finite. Its understanding of the revelation of God cannot be a comprehensive understanding. And the Christian knows that the "man of sin" within him always keeps him from unreservedly making his mind completely subject to the "obedience of Christ."

But who are we to say that God *cannot* speak infallibly in the Bible? Who are we to say that no man, no

prophet or apostle *can* be used of the Spirit of God to make his will known to men? We would ourselves need to know all to know that such *cannot* be the case.

It is to such lengths that men must go, once they forsake the idea of the Scriptures as the infallible Word of God.

The ecumenical movement, about to become the ecumenical church, *assumes* that truth is relative. Accordingly its members assume that there *can* be no infallible Bible. It is with this assumption that they come to the facts of Scripture. They look through the colored glasses of the relativism of all human thought.

On this basis what is there left of the idea of the gospel of Christ? Why should you, on this basis, prepare yourself for the preaching of the gospel? There are then no sinners who need the gospel. There is then no Christ who died to save men from the wrath to come. There is then no "father's home" into which those in Christ shall be received. All is love and all love is lost.

It is not because we are better than other men, better in thought and in life, that we still believe and teach what Luther and Calvin taught. It is only by grace that we are saved. It is only by grace that we receive the Bible as the Word of God.

Yet, having been saved by grace, we can, after that, tremblingly yet confidently assert that without this Bible and without the Christ of this Bible men must presume to stand within pure emptiness and yet determine what can and cannot exist and be true.

We therefore humbly invite you with us to study the Bible, to see what its challenge is to men, to learn to confront men everywhere with the Christ of the Scriptures, could it be to their salvation and to the glory of God.

## Church Membership Near Hundred Million Mark

**M**EMBERSHIP IN CHURCHES and religious bodies in the United States is now over the hundred million mark, according to statistics contained in the National Council's *Yearbook of American Churches* for 1957.

The figure includes 58,448,567 listed as Protestants, 33,396,647 listed as Roman Catholics, 5,500,000 Jews, 2,386,945 Eastern Orthodox, and 430,000 in other specified groups.

These figures are based on reports furnished by 258 out of the 268 relig-